

Panel of Scientists Backs McNamara On Missile Defense

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U.S. scientists came to the support of secretary of defense Robert S. McNamara in his feud with the Senate by declaring yesterday that deployment of an antimissile system would only heat up the arms race.

The Society of American Scientists' executive board declared its opposition to a Senate vote last week which provided \$168 million to pay for the first step toward deployment of the Nike-X antimissile missile system.

The scientists said the system would not adequately defend Americans against a missile attack, but would prove to be an expensive segment of the international arms race.

"These expenditures, truly enormous over extended periods, would be the hallmark of a frightened, not a great society," the board said.

McNamara, in congressional testimony, had said the

Nike-X was incapable of defending the United States against a Soviet missile attack and should be kept in the research-and-development stage.

The Senate overruled him and provided extra funds for initial work. But McNamara still has the upper hand. There is nothing that compels him to spend the money.

The scientists said they also feared Soviet reaction to a Nike-X system. "Were we to deploy a missile defense," the board said, "we could expect the Soviet Union in due course to respond no less strongly with offensive weapons of its own. And in turn, efforts to improve Soviet offensive weapons will threaten our own, as well as induce us to still further defensive efforts."

The statement said, "There is no way out of this direction because there is no defense against nuclear war except to avoid one. Attempts to secure such a defense will, by fits and starts, lead only to further spirals of expenditures."

The Society, composed of some 2500 members, is a nationwide organization of scientists and engineers. Its executive board frequently issues statements on scientific matters concerning national security as it did yesterday.